

# The Should Be Goal of Education: What should be taught? and How should it be taught?

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## Abstract

The role of education is to be reflective (about what? Why? and how?) in preserving the civilization identity and human capability of a nation. This is particularly true because education is the cornerstone to building human capability and capacity that can develop a country. A well-formulated educational goal will serve as a moral compass for individuals in order to be fully aware of the reasons behind their existence. Education should lead a person to be reflective of his/her life, jettison vague norms or ideas and to chat the future on the right direction. Determining or articulating the goals of education have always been a challenge, be it present or in the past due to its multifaceted manifestation in a different aspect of society. This study provides a capsule representation of what should be the goal (s) of education by looking into arguments and opinions of past education philosophers and scholars. It is concluded that the goal of education is diverse along historically and civilization spectrum but the essence—as human development remains its nucleus.

**Keywords:** keywords, Education, Goal, Hellenic, Islamic

## 1. Introduction

Most intellectuals and decision-makers in the educational arena of the present milieu are aware of the importance of working out a strategy, anticipating the prospects of education, with a view to developing its structures, revitalizing and/or redefining its missions and goals. This paper makes no pretense of providing exhaustive solutions or answers to the entire problems or challenges raised herein—which require new and unprecedented solutions, but rather, tries to present a narrative of ideas and thoughts of some great philosophers and explanations to the following fundamental questions:

### 1.1 Research Questions

- What is/are the "should be goal(s)" of education?
- Should the goal be individually defined or should it be meant to conform to the societal norms?
- Should the goal be determined or fixed by people in power?
- Do people really need to have the education of their choice or education based on the choice of others?

Attempting these questions may necessitate embarking on intellectual journey—by having conversation with the Greek (Socrates and Plato) philosophers, the French (Rousseau), the Romantic philosophers (Kant) and Muslims philosophers (Al-Ghazali, Ibn Sina, and Ibn Khaldun)

## 2. Hellenic education principle

### 2.1 Socrates

Socratic philosophy of education is to speak of reflective knowledge and education as opposed to the accumulation of knowledge—wherein the question remains the same but the answers keep changing, thus making the answers more relevant and not the questions asked. However, in Socrates' ideal education, questions are more important than the answer, thus, the position of a teacher is like a "Gadfly" that constantly challenges the students reasoning. Unfortunately, the basic problem with arriving at such a reflective educational goal and philosophy is that schools, especially the higher education are not governed by a reflective philosophy. What seems to be available to us is a system of educational ideas, which have been generalized into mass value judgments, without any analysis or challenges to reasoning being made as to the possible harmful effects of such unreflective generalization. Socratic Method of teaching has often been characterized as a method of arriving at the truth—in which the teacher assumes the role of a midwife.

Socrates argues that 'there is no such thing as teaching, only recollection' and that teachers should play the role of the midwife in order to deliver their pupils of the knowledge they unconsciously possess. This point to the significant meaning in Socrates' statement in Plato's *Apology* that: "*I know because I know that I know nothing*". Therefore, educational goal or objective that is more of transmission rather than reflective, autonomy rather than intellectual freedom is a less worthy exercise. If education is important in the paradoxical statement of Rousseau of force, human being to be free, then, human entire life becomes an issue to be addressed in education. It is now becoming an issue of human being taking responsibility for his/her own life. Therefore, the educational goal should be tailored towards enabling individual to be critical of the world in which he/she

dwells. Uncritical life is not worthy of leaving. Education goal that will enable the individual to question the status-quo will threaten the social order and anarchy in Plato's view. For this reason, Plato subscribed for education that maintain status-quo.

## 2.2 Plato

Plato's dialectic method of knowledge as the conversation is to engage in systematic, logical examination of all points of views, which will ultimately lead to an agreement, and a synthesis of ideas. Plato believed education will help to move individuals collectively toward achieving the need of the society because inherent in an individual is a potential that corresponds to the need of the society. Plato visualized a state in his 'Republic' and visualized the kind of education that may actualize the latent goals of his utopian state. In Plato's Republic, the State should involve in education, moving brighter students—, which he described as the “Guardian” toward abstract ideas and the less able—the ancillaries, artisan and others toward collecting data. Unique to Plato's education is a gender free tracking system. However, entrenched in Plato's education is tracking by ability—those who are brighter should rule, and others should assume roles to maintain the state. It is understood that Plato's education ideology is more of 'knowledge tracking' than of gender-free tracking system. In addition, the fact that “The Just state” of Plato did not provide a mechanism via which women can grow at par with men, makes Plato's education more in favor of men—who are more at the advantage of becoming guardians after war compared to female. Moreover, the fact that knowledge is being used as a referee to judge and determine the position and status which individual can rise to or occupy in society, makes Plato's educational goal to be more of maintaining the status quo, as opposed to that of Socrates which is more of reflective. The educational goal that is more in favor of answers rather than questions will produce subjects and not citizens. Better still, an educational goal that subjugates the entire human life to sellable knowledge at the expense of human dignity as witnessed in the later part of the enlightening period and at the beginning of 19th century is a precedent of Plato's ideology. This Hellenistic—Platonic ideology of knowledge and philosopher-king, also influences some Muslims intelligentsias and leaders—wherein educational goal in all ramifications is to chain peoples' mind to a 'designed need' of food, shelter and merriment alone at the expense of examining what it takes to lead a good life.

### 2.2.1 Role of Platonic philosophy on Islamic education

Furthermore, some Ulama (Islamic scholars) arrogate absolute interpretation of Islamic jurisprudence, text, and rites to themselves. 'They' make interpretation of Islamic Shariah a rule-bound—which disallow any form of creative tendencies and sealed-off every individual situation, embodied and perceptions, but to follow the 'THE Perception'—a socially constructed rigid rules as they are. This led to the consequential and unprecedented notion of Taqlid—an extreme dogma or blind following—a notion that stagnates creative and rational thinking among many Muslims for eons. Example of this is the well-known decree of al-Qadir in 1017-18 and 1029 that banned the rationalist school of speculative theology that thrived during the Al-Mahmun (Abbasyd) reign in Baghdad and Andalusia (Arkoun, 2002 cited in Bakare & Che Noraini 2014). Another instance is the closure of “the gates of Ijtihad”, the “sustained reasoning” for individual Muslims (Sardar 2010). Instead, the exercise of Ijtihadic reasoning is attributed to be the sole activity of some selective scholars. These scholars become what Plato called the “philosopher-king” who can contemplate the ultimate reality and give final verdict or sanction any educational, social, economic and political issues for every Muslims. Most of the traditional, ultra-conservatives and orthodox Islamic schools belief are feeding students with unquestionable knowledge. This kind of authoritative educational ends have led to disappearance of creative and innovative spirit among the graduate of these schools over many centuries. It is not unusual, to find the young generation of Muslims nowadays in a constant and consistent state of confusion of their religion and education policies. In a nutshell, educational goal of Plato is to satisfy the need of the society—created by the society—because society harbors the arts and the sciences, as well as social conventions, which need to be filled-up by human beings, specialized in certain knowledge. Thus, the educational goal is to bring out the hiding potentials in a human being in order to satisfy the societal needs or solve societal problems without asking why the need or the problem arises. This socially created or constructed needs to be addressed by education seems unappealing to Rousseau who opted for autonomy and general will of people.

## 3. Romantic Education assumptions

### 3.1 Jean-Jacques Rousseau

Rousseau believes that presence of different socially created activities would corrupt the natural learning instinct of a child; this to a large extent has left the educator in a shaky position of a “forced choice”. A choice has to be made either to educate children according to their innate demand (that is, the person as he naturally is), or according to the state demand (citizen: the man who lives in, and is shaped by, his society). This is the reason for

Rousseau's statement "man is born free, but everywhere he is in the chain". To Rousseau, the formation of intercept for the educational goal of human and state is difficult. As such, education has to be used as a conduit to rest the "hegemonic power either from nature or society—a choice has to be made, you cannot train both! This notion led to Rousseau's imaginary education journey of only one person—Emile whose subtle instinct or innate are allowed to manifest progressively during the course of learning. Base on Rousseau's education principle, a child should learn from objects in his or her environment, not from books.

Furthermore, Rousseau's intentional consequence in his time was an attempt to use Emile (his fictional boy) as an educational blueprint—a coalescence of knowledge modalities that should guide education. The idea was clearly believed to have transcended education meant for a human. However, many years later, the concept of 'education according to nature' gain momentum and became the reference themes of the progressive education movement of the late eighteenth century. Rousseau's education blueprint was also couched in the educational philosophy of the Dewey. The education travails of Rousseau's Emile is highly infused with established norms that chat course in child rearing, as well as the, should be principles or aims of the educational process. Thus, educational goal of Rousseau is to give autonomy to man and his education. School or society should not impose or suppress the natural tendencies of the child. Children should go to school only when they are willing and ready to learn something. Book learning and seat in time should not be the principal mode of education for teenagers; they should naturally learn from the surrounding around them. Acquisition of religion and non-religion knowledge education should be seen as the same.

One may inquire what the rationale behind Rousseau's normative advice in Emile's educational journey is. Simply, it was Rousseau's speculative/metaphysical theory that child curiosity to learn is the manifestation of child intrinsic and natural process. With these assumptions, Rousseau has made a radical shift from a platonic view of "*castes skill*" by subscribing to intrinsic and natural process of human development. Since the just society Plato advocate does not really exist, subjecting the child education process and goal to a utopian or corrupt society is impractical

On the other hand, it is noteworthy that Rousseau's theory is found wanting in many other things. Rousseau's educational goal lies in his fictional roadmap without a corresponding practical demonstration of how natural education would work. This made it impossible for the avoidance of contradictions, which makes the whole idea of education according to nature untenable. However, his ideas have been adopted into Maria Montessori's early childhood education that spread all over the world.

#### **4. Immanuel Kant**

Nevertheless, for modern transcendental idealists such as Kant, Hegel, and others, the goal of education should be the search for truth through ideas. Kant's notion is that, with truth comes the responsibility to enlighten others. Thus, education is the transformation of ideas that can change lives. The roles of teachers, therefore, are to analyze and discuss ideas with students so that students can move to new levels of awareness and they can ultimately be transformed. The main aim of education is to bring out what is already in student's mind. They further argued from the nature of knowledge to the nature of the objects of knowledge—without suggesting that those objects are composed of ideas or located in the knower's mind. Kant is of the opinion that all that can be known of things is the way in which they appear in experience; there is no way of knowing what they are substantially in themselves. He also held, however, that the fundamental principles of all sciences are essentially grounded in the constitution of the mind rather than being derived from the external world. Kant's ethical ideas are the logical outcome of his belief in the fundamental freedom of the individual as stated. Freedom according to Kant is the freedom of self-government, the freedom to obey consciously the laws of the universe as revealed by reason. In addition to that, the responsibility of education is to arouse individual awareness of these inalienable rights. He also believed that education should lead to the welfare of each individual being properly regarded as an end in itself. This is clearly defined in his statement that "Human beings have dignity, every other thing has a price". This implied that the world was progressing toward an ideal society in which reason would 'bind every lawgiver' to make his laws in such a way that they could have sprung from the united will of an entire people. The lawgiver must equally regard every subject in so far as he wishes to be a citizen, on the basis of whether he has conformed to that will. The dialectical method, which was used by Karl Marx, was an outgrowth of the method of reasoning that Kant used. Therefore, it is not a gainsay, that most romantic philosophers are influenced by Kant's idea.

#### **5. Education goal from Islamic Perspective**

Education in Islam is a way towards achieving the ultimate purpose of creation. This is in line with the teachings of Allah (SWT): "I have only created jinns and humans so that they may serve Me" (Al-Dariyat: 56). Effective educational goal and processes, therefore, should be based on firm foundations, a goal-oriented and clear plans, in conformity with the saying of Allah: "To each of you have We prescribed a Law and an Open Way" (Al-Maida:48). Education also builds in person the Islamic values of faith, knowledge, work, cooperation, tolerance,

peace and proper conduct, among other higher values enshrined in both Qur'an and Sunnah. Islamic philosophy of education represents the high point of Islamic thinking on education, in which his inclination towards reconciliation and the integration of various intellectual schools is apparent.

According to some scholars, "Islamic education focus on thorough knowledge of the subject matter of the holy Quran, the Sunna (a way of life for Muslims) and rules of Islam. Other literatures refer Islamic education to include "tarbiya," which is offered by formal or informal institutions in Muslim countries. The aim of Islamic education is "a pure activity that truly has objectives and targets. The education requires the establishment of tiered-programs through the improvement and the teaching activity according to the systematic sequence, which is, bring up a child from a development to other upper developments. It is worth mentioned that the nature of Islamic education is characterized with the comprehensiveness of nature as in various disciplines in the field of human sciences. This is, narrated in the famous story of Tawaddud debating leading scholars in the presence of Amir al-Mu'minin, Harun Al-Rashid, " knowledge is of two categories; namely, "Ilm al-Adyan (religious knowledge), which is more important, and Ilm al-Abdan (physiological knowledge) dealing with the human body". The knowledge that gets one closer to God is any genuine knowledge that emanates from a sincere pursuit of the truth and a painstaking effort to seek the right way.

*"It is not for a human [prophet] that Allah should give him the Scripture and authority and prophethood and then he would say to the people, "Be servants to me rather than Allah," but [instead, he would say], "Be pious scholars of the Lord because of what you have taught of the Scripture and because of what you have studied." Al-Quran 3:79*

Through Muslim history, there are a number of Muslim scholars who contribute immensely to human sciences such as in the fields of Mathematics, Chemistry, Medical Sciences and Medicine, Astronomy, Anatomy, History and Sociology, linguistic studies. Out of this list of Muslim Scholars, the following are noteworthy:

1. Al-Ghazali
2. Ibn Sina (Avicenna)
3. Ibn Khaldun, an honorable name in both fields of history and sociology.

#### 5.1 Al-Ghazali

Al-Ghazali's educational thought was influenced by the zeal of Islamic religious philosophy. To him, in Islam, the foundation of education is the Qur'an and Sunna Nabil Nofal (2000). Through education, one should become a sincere servant of God in all aspects of life—deeds, thoughts, and feelings. The aim of education according to Ghazali is to make a strong relationship with God and his creation. Therefore, the main goal of education is for a man to gain the transcendental happiness. He further stressed that this happiness can only come through acquisition of knowledge that "towered above reason". This kind of knowledge lies in revelation or what he refers to as "wahy". This divine knowledge is further solidified by application of the Islamic rule-govern principles in the society. In this sense, every child should be taught with the integrated education—religion mores and natural sciences to bring them up to live a righteous and productive life. Education aim of Ghazali solicits for nurturing the spiritual aspect of human being, which necessitate putting a bar to knowledge based on reason alone. This is well couched in what is called "rational limitation". This kind of call to Western intelligential is neither known to "M" nor exist in the time of "M". That is, this kind of knowledge (that devoid reason) hardly exist in reality, that all acclaimed instances are mere fantasy. Ghazali's spiritual education system is different from that of ibn sina (Avicenna) who advocate for the education of the philosophers.

#### 5.2 Ibn Sina (Avicenna)

Education is the preparation of the ground for profusion and fostering for oneself. Therefore, education is nurturing baby so that he or she can realize his or her uniqueness as a creation and worshipper of one God. Ibn Sina mentioned in his book Ilm al-Akhlaq, in Majmuc al-Rasa'il that the essence of education should be the training for personal and social preparation. This form of social contract is built exclusively on 'co-operation', the specialization of each netizen in artisanship or professionals as well as on the mutual exchange of services between individuals with the aim of contributing to social structure. This education goal draws the activities for a family in nurturing the child and settle the social needs—a platonic view. Therefore, education is a way of ensuring overall growth for an individual according to his or her skills and abilities. An educational goal from Ibn Sina's viewpoint did not pay attention only to intellectual and moral aspect alone but given attention for overall aspect of human life. Ibn Sina's education philosophy lies in the making of an upright citizen, sound in body and mind, and preparing him/her for some intellectual activities—which is connected to traditional science/theoretical science or a practical work—which is more of artisan and craft (Abd al-Rahman al Naqib 2000).

### 5.3 Ibn Khaldun

Educational discussion of Ibn Khaldun was on social development perspective. Khaldun's theory of education was illustrated in the Islamic social framework and his attention on education was from the religious, sociological and ethical point of view. To Ibn Khaldun, education is a replica of individuals and groups at the level of value followed by a level of knowledge and know-how. Though, in his *Muqaddima*, Ibn Khaldun makes no specific use of education as a concept, because his written made the readers be busy in reflecting on the systematic approach to the main phenomena of life in society. However, upon close examination of his work, it was uncovered that his education parody mirrors the profound separation between the rural and urban worlds. The composition of scholars, non-centralized, non-hereditary, non-exclusive and non-hierarchy social or commonwealth system. This kind of education system foreshadowed our modern systems (Makdisi, 1990). In addition, Ibn Khaldun emphasizes on the inculcation of religious values. He pointed out the consequences of Quranic teaching on mental development. He equally acknowledges that attainment of knowledge among the human being is natural as they hold rational and logical power. To him, real knowledge could be known by the revelation. Ibn Khaldun in principle agreed with the education and instructional reforms proposed by Ibn al-Arabi, in which the children are mandated to learn the language and the rules of calculation. In confirming to the structural features of the Islamic education system of religious, he stressed on the need for every Muslim to know the real knowledge—the Qur'an and Sunnah. Knowing the Qur'an and Islamic science is the main goal of education to Ibn Khaldun.

### 6. Conclusion

With the background now in place, the discussion can return to the long-delayed main issue: what is/are the "should be goal/s" of education? In the light of answers to this question – what is the philosophy of education? There are numbers of ways of describing the works of philosophers and these has been illustrated in the examples discussed. My (speculative) suggestion is that as a field, philosophy of education is on a par in complexity not with any one branch of philosophy, but with the whole field of philosophy and that once a person embarks on the intellectual journey, the life is at stake. Therefore, "education is life beginning and life ending". Finally, perhaps the concern lying behind the 'what is/are "the should be goal(s)" of education' is to be reflective about our practices, to avoid inconsistencies in our beliefs, to be aware of what we are committed to as a consequence of holding the principles we claim to hold. Education should aimed at expanding learners' horizon of possibilities by considering alternative goals and ideas that might never have occurred to them if they had not venture and invest in it. How to educate people depends on the evolvement (development) of each society and maturity of the citizens. Less evolved society nations should opt for teaching that is geared toward realizing the common will of the society created by the society. Thus, teaching should be directed to the need of the country at large. The educational curriculum and teaching should be marshaled and channeled toward attaining identifiable competencies (in artisan and professional) that are needed for the less evolved society to sustain itself.

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